

April 15, 2025

College Athlete NIL Litigation, Case No. 4:20-cv-03919 - NCAA Roster Limitations

Dear Honorable Claudia Wilken,

I write to you today not just as a concerned parent, but as an advocate for countless student-athletes whose dreams hang in the balance of your forthcoming decision regarding NCAA roster limitations. My son is a sophomore engineering student and cross country / track athlete and I respectfully ask that you consider his story—and the stories of many others like him—as you deliberate.

My son has dedicated himself to both academic excellence and athletic achievement since he was young. His journey to compete at the Division I level represents years of discipline, sacrifice, and unwavering commitment. This opportunity wasn't handed to him—it was earned through countless hours of training before dawn, after dusk, and yes, even on holidays when most would prioritize comfort and celebration.

Last Christmas morning illustrates the depth of his commitment. As our family gathered around the tree with presents waiting to be opened, my son quietly rose at 7 a.m., filled his water bottle, collected his training gear, and headed out into the Northeast winter cold. While most college students were sleeping in or enjoying family time, he hopped the fence at the locked school track, completed his stretching routine, and executed his workout in solitude. Two hours later, he returned home, showered, and joined us for family celebrations—never once mentioning the presents under the tree or complaining about his self-imposed obligation. His only concern was maintaining his training regimen while still being present for his family.

This is the character of the student-athlete whose future now rests in your hands. My son is not a scholarship athlete or among the top third of performers on his team. He's precisely the type of dedicated participant who would be eliminated if roster limitations are reduced. He has successfully balanced the rigorous demands of an engineering curriculum with the intensive training required to compete at this level—a remarkable achievement that demonstrates exceptional time management, focus, and determination.

The proposed roster reductions would effectively end his athletic career and dash the dreams he has pursued since childhood. All those pre-dawn training sessions, carefully monitored nutrition plans, and the camaraderie built with teammates would become distant memories rather than the foundation of his continuing athletic journey.

I respectfully ask that your ruling include provisions to protect students like my son—those who may not be top performers but who embody the true spirit of collegiate athletics through their dedication, work ethic, and balanced pursuit of academic and athletic excellence. These students derive immeasurable benefits from their participation: discipline, teamwork, resilience, time management, and healthy lifestyle habits that will serve them throughout their lives.

While I understand the complex factors at play in this decision, I implore you to consider the profound human impact of roster reductions. Each number represents a student with a story of sacrifice and dedication—a young person whose identity and college experience are deeply intertwined with their athletic participation.

Thank you for your consideration of this deeply personal matter.

Respectfully submitted,


Todd Smith